



MEMORANDUM

TO: Department Directors

FROM: Sara Hensley, CPRP, Director, Parks and Recreation *S. Hensley*

DATE: November 16, 2010

SUBJECT: Park and Recreation Agency Accreditation

In 1989, the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) established a committee of park and recreation professionals to develop standards for an agency accreditation process. The group created ten categories of standards that would allow park and recreation agencies to compare their practices to a professional model. In 1996, the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) was formed and the standards for national accreditation were finalized. The 144 standards in ten (10) service categories allow an agency to measure its effectiveness and efficiency by providing services in accordance with approved professional practice. Agency accreditation has become a method for park and recreation departments to become more accountable to taxpayers while improving the delivery of services.

Agency accreditation reflects the progression of the park and recreation management discipline in advancing the professional accountability of our field. It is the next step in the professionalization of the field and is a source of pride for staff and constituents to know their department has received peer review and external recognition as a high-quality government service.

In 2005 the Department began to seriously consider strategies for attaining accreditation through CAPRA. Committees were formed and team leaders were assigned to address each of the ten categories identified in the accreditation process. Assignments were given and staff began evaluating our Department against the professional standards established by CAPRA. These professional standards served as an aid for improving performance and maintaining quality. They provided our staff with an opportunity to evaluate our operation, while achieving a higher level of efficiency and effectiveness.

In accepting the accreditation challenge, the Department personnel worked diligently to complete a self-assessment of the Department's policies, procedures and standards and compare our practices to the national standards. Additionally, through the Department's self-assessment, staff began creating an improvement process that is gradually building an organizational culture for strategic thinking and planning.

In September, 2007, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department became one of eighty-nine park and recreation agencies in the country to receive national accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies

CAPRA accreditation is our commitment to the citizens of Austin that we strive for continuous improvement. The CAPRA accreditation process and results help to ensure a high level of accountability throughout our department and facilitates efficient and effective delivery of park and recreation services to our citizens. It is a tool that promotes the excellence of our park and recreation system.

In April of this year the Department began preparing our assessment document for re-accreditation. This re-accreditation process will help us assess how well we have been conducting business compared to our 2007 accreditation and to national standards. Although the assessment document is not due until May 2012, we are gathering documentation and preparing responses now.

In order to accomplish this I have assembled an Accreditation Leadership Team to oversee the process. Each member of the Leadership team will be establishing work teams to ensure each component and standard has accurate, appropriate and current documentation that reflects our service delivery model.

A major component of agency accreditation is the support of elected officials and city leaders. Once we learn the visitations dates, I want to invite you to meet the visiting professionals who will be assessing our department.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager